



NCLIS

U.S. National Commission on
Libraries and Information Science

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**Meeting of the
U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science
December 15-17, 2003
Washington DC**

These minutes report actions and summarize discussions occurring at the Commission meeting. A verbatim transcript of the meeting is maintained at the Commission office.

NCLIS Members: Joan Challinor, Chairperson, Jack Hightower, Robert Martin (Institute of Museum and Library Services), and Nancy Davenport (Library of Congress). Regrets: Bobby Roberts

NCLIS Members-Designate: Beth Fitzsimmons, Bridget L. Lamont, José Aponte, Sandra Ashworth, Edward Bertorelli, Carol L. Diehl, Allison Druin, Colleen E. Huebner, Stephen M. Kennedy, Mary H. Perdue, Herman L. Totten (Regrets: Patricia N. Hines)

NCLIS Staff: Robert Willard, Executive Director; Madeleine McCain, Director of Operations; Robert Molyneux, Director of Statistics and Surveys; Kim Miller, Special Assistant Technical; Julie Yoon, Administrative Officer; Khadija Khaalis, Secretary; Forest Woody Horton, Consultant

Guests: Former Commission José-Marie Griffiths; David DeLuc, Software and Information Industry Association; Lynn Bradley, American Library Association Washington Office

Opening Remarks

Chairperson Challinor called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 17, 2003, and welcomed those in attendance.

As there were no draft minutes yet available from the previous meeting (May 2003), Chairperson Challinor deferred the approval of the minutes to a future meeting. As the Commission did not have a quorum for the meeting, any action items would require the Commission to recess and reconvene as the Executive Committee, as the Executive Committee is empowered to take action when necessary. No such actions were taken at this meeting.

Chairperson Challinor then warmly welcomed the Commissioners-Designate to NLCIS and invited each of them to identify himself or herself and say something about their interest in the work of the Commission and how they expected to work as NCLIS members. The Commissioners-Designate did so.

Orientation Information

Executive Director Robert Willard distributed a roster for the use of the Commissioners and, once confirmed, the Commissioners-Designate. He also explained the use of e-mail as the communications tool for the Commission, and explained to the Commissioners and Commissioners-Designate that once sworn in they would be working as part-time federal employees. NCLIS is a federal agency and not, as some people misunderstand, “just one more interest group in Washington.”

Director of Operations Madeleine McCain explained travel and financial activities for the Commission, and described how NCLIS is “attached” to the Department of Education by virtue of an interagency agreement, as the department supplies administrative backup services in areas like human resources, legal services, travel, and financial management.

NCLIS History

Mr. Willard described the Commission’s history, beginning with President Lyndon Johnson’s appointment of the National Advisory Commission on Libraries, established in 1965. The Advisory Commission held hearings throughout the United States to gauge the current status of libraries in America, and they commissioned about 15 consultant reports which, as Mr. Willard noted, “even today have value in reading.” The Commission’s full report was published in the last issue of 1968’s Congressional Record, and on the first day of the next Congress, January 3, 1969, Congressman Bill Steiger of Wisconsin, introduced legislation that established national policy declaring the importance of library and information science for the American people and establishing a permanent commission to see to the implementation of that policy. The legislation (Public Law 91-345 July 20, 1970) established NCLIS as an independent agency, and described the Commission’s mission in specific terms, to “advise the President and the Congress” on the implementation of policy. Or, as Mr. Willard described the Commission’s function in his presentation to the Commission, “to develop or recommend overall plans for and advise the appropriate governments and agencies on the policy that is spelled out at the beginning of the legislation.

Mr. Willard then described the later history of the Commission, including its involvement with two White House Conferences on Library and Information Services, and the years in which the Commission was faced with the threat of being disbanded. The threats was overcome and the Commission survived. Today NCLIS is currently functioning as a very small agency of the federal government, with an annual budget of \$1,000,000 that supports the management of the agency and the services of the Commissioners.

Statistics and Surveys

Executive Director Willard described the Library Statistics Cooperative Program, under Dr. Molyneux's direction, in which the Commission works with the National Center for Education Statistics. Mr. Willard remarked that the program focuses on the use of statistics and on their utility, particularly with the creation of data sets that can be used in the teaching environment. Dr. Molyneux then reported on the statistics and surveys work at NCLIS, described in detail at the NCLIS website

<http://www.nclis.gov/statsurv/statist.html>

Dr. Molyneux noted that there is a memorandum of understanding with the National Center for Education Statistics, which is charged with collecting data on various kinds of libraries. He distributed a document, prepared for the Commission's international visitors, based on the data from the different sets of programs. NCES collects data on four kinds of libraries: public libraries, state library agencies, academic libraries, and school library media centers. Dr. Molyneux then described how library statistics are used, in decision support and research.

Finally, in response to a question, Dr. Molyneux noted that states also collect data, which varies in some extent to the national data, collected by NCES.

Financial Report

Executive Director Robert Willard began the financial report by commending Director of Operations Madeleine McCain for organizing the report to provide information describing the Commission's financial activities. Ms. McCain distributed a summary budget and provided financial background to the Commission and its work. Noting that NCLIS, as a federal agency, is funded with an annual appropriation, she pointed out that the Commission is required to fulfill the same requirements as any agency. This role requires NCLIS to become involved in agency management activities (with, for example, website design, archival storage of electronic and paper documents, security, contracts, etc.). Additionally, as an agency with largely advisory capacity, the largest amount of the appropriated money goes for staff and managing the agency (rent, contractual services, postage, web hosting and maintenance, subscriptions, memberships, and the interagency agreement with the Department of Education, which charges an annual fee for services provided). All these expenses, Ms. McCain reported, are relative fixed, as they are contractual obligations. In the summary budget distributed, once these amounts are

deducted, the Commission has very little money (\$116,547.19) for twelve months to cover travel, supplies, office equipment, teleconferencing fees, printing, and any Commission expenses.

“Trust and Terror” Project

With this historical and financial information for background, Chairperson Challinor opened the discussion of NCLIS projects. To begin, she introduced Former Commissioner José-Marie Griffiths, who had worked with the Commission in developing the “Trust and Terror” project. Conceived soon after the 9/11 attacks, the project was thought of as a way of observing the role that libraries around the country play in supporting their local communities, something that should be leveraged as the federal government in particular started thinking in terms of homeland security. As the project moved ahead, the first product was a presentation, a CD, narrated by Walter Cronkite, to be distributed to libraries, community organizations, state governments, and other interested agencies and parties. The Commissioners discussed the CD and agreed informally that a revised version might be considered. During the discussion, it was mentioned that the distribution of the CD was disappointing (because of lack of funding available for distribution). However, as the subject of the CD was discussed enthusiastically by the Commissioners, it was pointed out that a theme throughout the discussion is the opportunity that the product (and similar products) presents to raise the possibility of what libraries can do.

Information Literacy and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

Chairperson Challinor described the summit, for which NCLIS was a delegate and which Dr. Challinor attended as the Commission’s representative.

Organized by the UN General Assembly in [Resolution 56/183](#) (21 December 2001), the summit is to take place in two phases. The first phase took place in Geneva hosted by the Government of Switzerland from 10 to 12 December 2003 and the second phase will take place in Tunis hosted by the Government of Tunisia, from 16 to 18 November 2005.

The first phase of the summit addressed the broad range of themes concerning the Information Society and adopted a Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action, which can be seen at:

http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsis/doc/S03-WSIS-DOC-0004!!MSW-E.doc

The summit had been preceded by an earlier meeting in Prague, the International Literacy Meeting of Experts, at which Dr. Challinor was also the NCLIS representative. Consultant Horton, who also attended the Prague meeting, provided the Commissioners with a description of the general subject of information literacy, for which he noted that the library community, libraries, librarians, and librarianship can “fairly take credit.”

The report of the Prague meeting (including the Prague Declaration, “Toward an Information Literate Society”) is published on the NCLIS website at:

<http://www.nclis.gov/libinter/infolitconf&meet/post-infolitconf&meet/FinalReportPrague.pdf>.

Government Information

Consultant Horton also briefed the Commission on three projects in the government information area:

- an examination of federal agencies and their policies in guiding the transition of paper-based and early pre-electronic government information products and services into the internet age
- a study about the role of the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) recommending that NTIS not be closed but that it could be better managed with an updated business model, a description of which can be seen at:

<http://www.nclis.gov/govt/ntis/ntis.html>

- a comprehensive assessment of public information, a description of which can be seen at:

<http://www.nclis.gov/govt/assess/assess.html>.

Chairperson Challinor described the fourth study, “Kids and The Internet: The Promise and the Perils,” November, 1998-March, 2000. This project included a hearing, which can be reviewed at:

<http://www.nclis.gov/info/kidshear.pdf>

and the publication of a document, “Kids and The Internet: The Promise and the Perils – Practical Guidelines for Librarians and Library Trustees” on the NCLIS website:

<http://www.nclis.gov/info/kids2.html>

NCLIS Relationship with the Institute of Museum and Library Services

Commissioner Robert Martin, Director of IMLS, provided an overview of the relationship between the two organizations. Dr. Martin described IMLS as an independent federal agency that serves as the primary source of grant support for the nation’s museums and libraries, both of which are considered social agencies that support education in the broadest sense. He pointed out that the role of IMLS is that of a funding

agency, to provide resources to strengthen institutional capacity of museums and libraries. IMLS does not have a role in advising Congress or the President on matters of policy (although occasionally IMLS may become engaged informally in such activities). That is the role of NCLIS, a role which, in fact, actually strengthens the position of libraries within the federal structure.

Dr. Martin then went on to describe the IMLS continuing effort to articulate what it is that the institute does and what it is that draws libraries and museums together. The goal is to make that idea comprehensible not only to the institute's staff and advisors, but to begin to talk about it in ways that make sense to the IMLS constituencies. The idea behind the concept is to create and sustain a nation of learners, and a fundamental element of the evolution to this concept is what Dr. Martin characterized as a "mandate for collaboration." This framework includes not only that IMLS itself will be collaborative (the institute staff has a senior position called "Director for Strategic Partnerships"), but that it will encourage others to be collaborative. For example, Dr. Martin commented that with respect to the government sector, "I'll know that we've been successful at this when other federal agencies start to come to us for our help to get museums and libraries involved in what they're doing because they recognize what museums and libraries can contribute to their achieving their goals."

Mary Chute, Director of Library Services for IMLS, then described several of the specific roles the institute plays, particularly with respect to funding support both for state library agencies (working with COSLA – the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies) and the National Leadership Grants.

Future Work for NCLIS

The discussion of the Commission's future work began with a comment from Nancy Davenport that the meeting so far had focused on three separate but equally important directions:

- a discussion about libraries in general and the role of NCLIS in the library and information science community
- identifying the Commission's priorities
- establishing a work plan, with cost requirements and a timeline

In light of the comments about collaboration from Dr. Martin and Ms. Chute, there was general agreement that collaboration should form the central focus of the Commission's work, linked with a structured program for higher visibility for NCLIS.

Several comments were made about how such a program would require the development of a functioning communications program with the Commission's larger public, including the library and information science industry, state, regional, and local authorities, and, as Chairperson-Designate Fitzsimmons pointed out, Congressmen and Senators and leaders in other federal agencies. The Commissioners agreed informally that

an emphasis on collaboration, greater visibility, and structured communication should be incorporated into the Commission's work.

As part of the discussion, the Commissioners referred to the need for, as Mr. Willard characterized it, "the big vision." Mr. Willard went on to state that whatever entity is chosen for realizing that vision, that entity must of necessity be strategic but, at the present time, it does not exist.

A wide-ranging discussion followed, with many different issues and concepts being put forward for consideration, all appropriate in the larger library and information science and societal framework, but many of which require greater resources than the Commission has available to it at the present time. The Commissioners noted that the NCLIS FY 2005 budget justification document was currently being drafted, to be sent to Congress by the President in early 2004, and that the earliest budget for which the Commissioners could plan is the FY 2006 budget (October 1, 2005-September 30, 2006).

Several potential programs were identified and agreed upon, informally, for emphasis by NCLIS. These programs were summarized in a matrix presented by Commissioner-Designate Huebner, "Meeting the Information Needs of the American Public: Focus Areas." Following the meeting, a second planning document, "Strategic Direction for the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, January 13, 2004," prepared by Dr. Challinor, was also distributed to the Commissioners and Commissioner-Designate. These documents are attached and are included in these minutes, describing what the Commission will seek to do. A first program – required by the legislation creating NCLIS – will be the development of a framework to appraise and assess libraries, or, as the Commissioners characterized it, a "report card on U.S. libraries."

Other programs for immediate emphasis will consider the role of libraries in four subject areas:

- educational achievement
- health education
- emergency preparedness
- workforce development.

As the discussion progressed, Vice-Chairperson-Designate Lamont raised the issue of how NCLIS would use any resources that it is able to obtain, either through the Congressional appropriation or otherwise. With respect to the "emphasis areas" informally agreed upon, she noted that theme of the discussion had been that NCLIS would be supporting this work "for leverage," "for visibility," and "for awareness." More important, Ms. Lamont stated, "before we go anywhere with this, we have to know and our director really has to know what our expected outcome of this is."

Ms. Davenport supported that concern, stating that since the Commission "is to work at the policy or the recommending level, not the programmatic level, [and] what we've been

talking about I think deals with not our need to do something, but the fact is that the American people have an overall need for information and information in order to be healthy, productive, participating citizens. ... I can take what you all are doing and tie it right back into Section 5 [of PL 91-345 July 20, 1970, the legislation which created the Commission] and the various points that are laid out in the law of what NCLIS is supposed to do. I think what we can do is address all of these, but the point is not to make us visible. It is to address the information needs of the American people.”

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to expanding on these concepts and ideas, and identifying how the Commissioners might work together once confirmed by the Senate.

Adjournment

Chairperson Challinor thanked the Commissioners and Commissioners-Designate for the participation, and specifically thanked President George W. Bush for nominating “a great group of people,” And she noted that she wanted to go on record to express her appreciation to the White House Personnel Office, particularly Eric Motley. The staff of this office, she noted, has been exceptionally helpful.

With no further business to bring before the Commission, Chairperson Challinor adjourned the meeting on Wednesday December 17, 2003, at 11:55 a.m.

**Strategic Direction
for the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science
January 13, 2004**

On Wednesday, December 17th, 2003, the Commission held a meeting at the Commission office in Washington, D.C. to discuss future directions for the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS). Present were three current and eleven nominated commissioners who are awaiting confirmation from the Senate. What follows is a summary of proposed future directions for the Commission.

The Commission takes most seriously its charge from the legislation that created NCLIS in 1970, to be responsible for “recommending overall plans for, and advising the appropriate governments and agencies” on the “library and information services adequate to meet the needs of the people of the United States.”

The Commission intends to continue our leadership role in the collection of statistics about libraries of all types and to participate in the development of library standards. We intend to advance the cause of school libraries as an essential component of solid academic achievement. We will continue our work, prompted by the 9/11 disaster, to help libraries prepare for emergencies, to safeguard their unique resources, and to serve their communities as trusted sources of information during times of stress.

The Commission hopes to be able to create a “Report Card on U.S. Libraries.” This “report card” should include both traditional library matters and the field of information services. Besides creating this “report card,” the Commission intends to work in four main areas: educational achievement, health education, emergency preparedness and workforce development—encouraging libraries to become centers for job information.

An existing template on Commission endeavors was reviewed and accepted. It asks the following questions: What does the Commission wish to accomplish; how can the Commission best achieve its goal; are other organizations working toward this goal and, if so, can the Commission work in partnership with them; who will benefit from this activity; how can the Commission make sure that its final results are useful; what funds and other resources are required; are the resources available and, if not, where can they be obtained; how can the Commission determine when its objective has been reached? We intend to examine all Commission programs against this template.

Lastly, the Commission looks forward to a promising future. It will be led by a group of energetic, knowledgeable and proficient Commissioners committed to the legislative directive that NCLIS should recommend and advise on the library and information service needs of the people of the United States

Joan R. Challinor, Ph.D., Chairperson